



# THE SUNDAY STANDARD



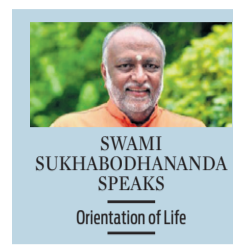
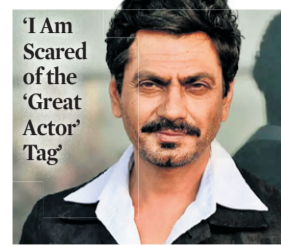
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## 300-YR WAIT FOR CHOLA PLATES ENDS

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

THE Netherlands on Friday formally returned the 11th-century Anaimangalam Chola Copper Plates to India, marking the culmination of a 14-year diplomatic effort to reclaim one of the most important surviving records of the Chola Empire and a prized symbol of Tamil heritage held overseas.

The handover took place in The Hague in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten.

Known in Europe for centuries as the Leiden Plates, the artefacts date to the reign of Emperor Rajaraja Chola I, the builder of the Brihadeeswara Temple at Thanjavur and among the most powerful rulers in South Asian history.



Anaimangalam Chola Copper Plate. The 21 copper plates carry the imprint of two generations of Chola power | x

### In Netherlands since 1700

Historians believe the plates reached the Netherlands around 1700 through Florentius Camper, linked to a Christian mission during the period of Dutch control over Nagapattinam. By then, the Dutch East India Company had made the city its headquarters on Coromandel Coast

One section of the plates, inscribed in Sanskrit, traces the genealogy and divine lineage of the Chola dynasty. The Tamil section records a striking act of medieval religious pluralism and international engagement, Rajaraja Chola I granting revenues from villages near Anaimangalam to support a Buddhist vihara in Nagapattinam built by the Srivijaya kingdom of Southeast Asia.

The inscription offers a rare glimpse into a cosmopolitan world where commerce, faith and political alliances travelled together along monsoon sea routes. A Shaivite emperor patronising a Buddhist institution established by a foreign ruler reflects the Chola Empire's maritime reach and cultural confidence. P7

## DDA to revive 101 water bodies: L-G



ADITI RAY CHOWDHURY @ New Delhi

THE Delhi Development Authority (DDA) plans to restore 101 water bodies by the end of August, Lt-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu said on Saturday while launching the 'Jal Sanchay Abhiyaan'.

In its first phase, 101 identified water bodies spread over about 155 hectares (383 acres) will be rejuvenated. Among these are 22 water bodies in the Dwarka Zone, 13 in the South Zone, 17 in the Rohini Zone, and 6 in the Narela Zone.

The L-G emphasised the importance of reviving traditional water bodies to ensure long-term water security, groundwater recharge, and ecological balance in the city.

The water body located inside Paschim Vihar's District Park, measuring approximately 1.47 hectares, has also been taken up for rejuvenation under the campaign.

Currently, the DDA manages a total of 822 water bodies. Of these, 424 have been identified for restoration works. Among these 424, as many as 101 have been taken up for immediate action under the "Jal Sanchay Abhiyaan" launched on Saturday.

The first phase of the campaign focuses on rejuvenation measures, including dredging, excavation, desilting and clearing natural catchment channels to improve rainwater harvesting before the monsoon season.

The Phase II of the initiative, targeted for completion by May 2027, will focus on ensuring the sustainability of the restored water bodies through fencing, strengthening embankments, installing Sewage Treatment Plants, and conducting plantation drives.



A screengrab of the drug haul at Mundra in Gujarat | x

## First-ever haul of 'jihadi drug' in India, 1 held

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Narcotics Control Bureau has busted an international drug syndicate involved in the trafficking of Captagon and seized approximately 227.7 kg of the 'jihadi drug' worth ₹182 crore, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said on Saturday.

This is the country's first-ever seizure of the drug, a highly addictive synthetic stimulant often referred to as 'jihadi drug', since it is widely popular among them.

One foreign national linked to the trafficking network was also arrested. Calling the seizure a landmark success in India's anti-drug campaign, Union home minister Amit Shah reiterated the government's commitment to a Drug-Free India and praised the agency for dismantling the network.

Sharing details of the operation, officials said NCB received a tip from a foreign drug law enforcement agency and raided a house in Neb Sarai, New Delhi. They recovered 31.5 kg of Captagon tablets on May 11. The drug was meant to be sent to Jeddah. The house was rented by a Syrian national.

His questioning led to the recovery of about 196.2 kg of Captagon powder from a container in the Container Facilitation Station (CFS) at Mundra, Gujarat, on May 14.

Shah said the drug syndicate was attempting to use India as a drug transit corridor.

### All about Captagon

Captagon is the street name of Fenethylamine, a synthetic stimulant originally developed during the 1960s for treatment of attention disorders and narcolepsy. Because of its highly addictive nature and widespread abuse potential, it was banned internationally. Today, most Captagon tablets are produced clandestinely using methamphetamine, caffeine and other synthetic stimulants

## 3rd language must for Class IX: CBSE

To kick in from July 1, score won't be a bar for X Boards

IFRAH MUFTI @ New Delhi

THE Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Saturday announced that the study of three languages will become compulsory for students from Class IX beginning July 1, 2026, in accordance with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023.

In a circular issued on Friday, the Board clarified that students must study three languages — referred to as R1, R2 and R3 — with at least two of them being native Indian languages. However, to reduce academic pressure, the CBSE stated that there will be no Board examination for the third language at the Class X level.

The Board said all assessments for the third language (R3) would be conducted internally by schools. Students' performance in the subject will still be recorded and reflected in the CBSE certificate, but no student will be prevented from appearing in the Class X Board examinations because of R3.

According to the circular, schools can choose any language from the CBSE-approved list of subjects, provided that at least two of them are Indian languages. Foreign languages may only be taken as the third language if the first two are Indian languages, or they may be opted for as an additional fourth language.



All assessments for R3 (third language) shall be entirely school-based and internal. The performance of students in R3 will be duly reflected in the CBSE certificate

CBSE circular

### Class VI textbooks for now

Students entering Class IX would initially study from Class VI-level textbooks for the third language until specialised secondary-level textbooks are introduced. Schools facing shortages of teachers can adopt temporary measures like sharing teaching resources with nearby schools

As part of the transition process, CBSE said students entering Class IX in 2026 would initially study from Class VI-level textbooks for the third language until specialised secondary-level textbooks are developed and introduced. Schools have also been encouraged to enrich classroom teaching with local and regional literary material to promote cultural and linguistic diversity.

The implementation of the three-language formula has raised concerns among some schools regarding teacher availability and infrastructure. Addressing these challenges, the CBSE advised schools facing shortages of qualified language teachers to adopt temporary measures such as sharing teaching resources with nearby schools, using virtual learning support, or hiring retired teachers and qualified postgraduate educators.

The Board also announced that relaxations would be provided for children with special needs, schools located outside India, and foreign students returning to the country. These exemptions and accommodations, the CBSE said, would be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure smooth implementation of the new policy.

## Elite Special Protection Group faces DIG crunch

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

FOLLOWING a similar crisis at the Intelligence Bureau, the country's Special Protection Group (SPG), responsible for the Prime Minister's security, is now grappling with a shortage of Deputy Inspector General (DIG)-rank IPS officers. This comes on the back of several senior IPS personnel being repatriated to their parent cadres.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has written to Chief Secretaries of all states except Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and Union Territories requesting them to identify and recommend eligible IPS officers for central deputation to the SPG.

States have been asked to widely circulate vacancy details among eligible officers and submit a list of willing candidates within 30 days, along with detailed service records, vigilance clearance, and the consent of nominated officers.

To qualify for DIG-rank positions in the SPG, officers must have completed a minimum of 14 years of IPS service. The stringent screening reflects the sensitivity of the role: DIG-rank officers in the SPG are responsible for strategic supervision, operational coordination, threat assessment, intelligence liaison, and oversight of security arrangements linked to the Prime Minister's domestic and international movements.

The shortage has become particularly significant after nearly a dozen DIG-rank officers were repatriated to their cadre states in recent months, creating gaps in the SPG's leadership structure. The impact is critical because of the SPG's specialised operational role.



### No end to IB's dearth of officers

As reported by this paper on April 27, the Intelligence Bureau has also been grappling with a dearth of IPS officers at the DIG-level. Of the 203 IPS posts in the Intelligence Bureau, 81 remain unfilled, indicating an overall shortfall of around 40 per cent. The DIG rank alone accounts for 36 vacancies against 63 posts

### EXPRESS READ

#### Bandi Sanjay's son surrenders

A day after the Telangana High Court refused to grant interim relief to Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar's son Bandi Bageerath, who has been booked under a POCSE case, he surrendered to the police on Saturday | P5

#### Another arrest in NEET paper leak

CBI arrested botany teacher Manisha Gurnath Mandhare, claiming she was the primary source of the NEET-UG botany paper leak. Based in Pune, she revealed the questions to select students at private coaching sessions | P8

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